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TOP SECRET 780543
December 28, 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Briefing of Secretary of State Vance on North Korean
Order of Battle, December 27, 1978

25X1A 1. The DCI, [REDACTED] NIO for East Asia and Pacific, and the undersigned, participated in a briefing of the Secretary of State on 27 December 1978 on the subject of the North Korean Order of Battle. Present from the Department of State were Assistant Secretary for East Asian Affairs, Richard Holbrooke; Departmental Spokesman, Hodding Carter, III; Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations, Douglas Bennet; and an unnamed representative from the Korean desk. Also present was a representative from DIA. (C)

25X1A 2. The DCI presented the briefing which he had given the President last week. He included additional elements from the briefing put together by [REDACTED]. At its conclusion, Secretary Vance observed that the key question as far as the Congress is concerned would be "are we talking about a massive and sudden buildup of North Korean troops here or are we speaking of new evidence leading to a new estimate of North Korean strength?" The DCI replied that we are speaking about a buildup of North Korean forces since 1970 which has continued to the present and increased substantially in the last year. (TS)

3. The discussion moved quickly to the meaning of this intelligence information. Mr. Holbrooke expressed the view that it is the net assessment which is critical. Do the North Korean forces now have substantial superiority to the South Koreans? The DCI pointed out that a net assessment of the North Korean threat has not been initiated with this new information. Indeed, DIA had not yet completed its validation and the Army (INSCOM) was still checking and re-checking its evidence. (TS)

4. Secretary Vance then asked what about the critical factors of warning time in the event of hostile North Korean action and what would the evidence suggest with respect to North Korean intentions. [REDACTED] replied that the North Koreans do not appear to have deviated from their intention to unify the Korean peninsula. (TS) 25X1A

5. The discussion then moved to the plan for Congressional notification. Secretary Vance asked the DCI to brief Senator Nunn personally on the evidence and since Senators Hart and Glenn will be travelling with Senator Nunn, they should be included also. Since the DCI will not be going to Bangkok, Secretary Vance thought it appropriate that the Director brief Senator Nunn prior to the Senator's departure on the evening of January 3rd. (The undersigned has checked with Senator Nunn's office and he will not be returning to Washington until the afternoon of January 2nd prior to his departure on the evening of January 3rd. We have scheduled the briefing for 9 a.m. January 3rd on Capitol Hill. Senators Glenn and Hart will also be invited. (C)

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7. With respect to other interested Members of Congress and their staffs, the CIA notification plan was largely accepted. The DCI declared his intention to have [REDACTED] do the briefings after January 2nd, subject to his being on call if an important Member or Senator requested his personal appearance. Secretary Vance agreed with this plan and suggested that Senators Inouye (D-Hawaii) and Percy (R-Ill), and Rep. Bill Broomfield (R-Mich) be added to our notification list. (S)

8. Finally, Mr. Holbrooke reported that Senator Nunn has already indicated that he intends to make a statement opposing American troop withdrawal plans, probably in Seoul on January 11. No difficulty was foreseen in securing Senator Nunn's assurance not to reveal numbers associated with the North Korean buildup in connection with any of his public statements. (S)

9. It is clear that by January 11, news of the continuing North Korean buildup will be in the public domain. Secretary Vance feels strongly that the US government should not reveal the numbers associated with the North Korean strength in any of its public utterances on the matter. This would create an unacceptable precedent. Hodding Carter will be working with Herb Hetu and Tom Ross on the US press release. (S)

[REDACTED]
Frederick P. Hitz
Legislative Counsel

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